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Oven Drying - One Way to Preserve  
Vegetables from the Victory Garden

Broadcast by Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics, and Wallace Kadderly, Radio Service, in the Department of Agriculture's portion of the National Farm and Home Hour, Tuesday, June 29, 1943, over stations associated with the Blue Network.

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WALLACE KADDERLY: And in Washington -- the facts about drying food in the household gas or electric oven ... one way - a small scale way - to save some of the corn and snap beans from the Victory Garden, if you don't have access to a steam pressure canner. And with that as the headline, here's Ruth Van Deman to give you the rest of the story.

RUTH VAN DEMAN: That was a masterly headline, Wallace. It told a great deal in a few words. For one thing, you made it clear that this is drying food in a gas or electric range. That's because you can control the heat in the oven of a modern gas or electric range, as you can't in a wood or coal stove.

KADDERLY: You have to keep the heat pretty low, don't you, to dry fruits and vegetables right?

VAN DEMAN: Yes, down around 150 degrees --- with the oven door propped open. And you need to keep the oven heat steady as well as low. It's surprising how easily fruits and vegetables will scorch as they're drying if the heat gets too high even for a short time.

KADDERLY: Well, it sounds to me as though you had to be a good watchman to dry food successfully in the home oven.

VAN DEMAN: Right. A good clock watcher and a good mover. Every half hour you have to shift trays ... to keep the food drying evenly. For vegetables, it takes from four to eight hours to dry them in a gas or electric oven. Fruits dry in about six hours.

KADDERLY: A swing shift and no fooling ... on the hour and on the half hour. How many trays in a stack?

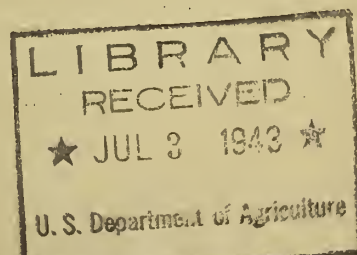
VAN DEMAN: Four generally. See here they are - pictured in this new leaflet on oven drying.

KADDERLY: This another new piece of material from the Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics?

VAN DEMAN: Yes ... another piece with another way to help save some of the surplus from the Victory Garden ... as you said in that all-inclusive headline.

KADDERLY: How much corn, or how many snap beans can you dry in an oven at one time?

(over)



VAN DEMAN: That depends on how large the oven is ... and on the food itself. Most fruits and vegetables have to be spread in a single layer on the trays. And each tray will take from one pound to two. That's fresh food, of course, one to two pounds after the food is cut and ready to dry.

KADDERLY: Um..m..m. Then with a four-tray stack you couldn't do more than eight pounds of food at a time - at most.

VAN DEMAN: That's right. Again quoting you - this is small scale drying.

Take sweet corn. It's not an easy vegetable to can at home, even when you have a steam pressure canner. But good dried sweet corn .....

KADDERLY: Is mighty good eating. Yes, I agree with you Ruth. It probably would be worth the time and effort to dry some sweet corn. Does your folder tell just how to do it?

VAN DEMAN: It does, yes. And I'll run through it now just briefly. Sweet corn to dry well must be very fresh and in the milk stage ... just right to eat as roasting ears. After the corn's husked and trimmed you steam it on the cob until the milk sets. That takes about 15 minutes, generally. Then cut it from the cob, and spread it evenly about one-half inch deep on the cotton netting on the trays. Slide the trays into the oven, which has been heated to 150 degrees. And start the time keeping.

KADDERLY: How do you know when the corn's dried enough?

VAN DEMAN: When it gets so dry it shatters to bits when you hit it with a hammer.

KADDERLY: You mean that literally ... hit it with a hammer?

VAN DEMAN: Yes. You only have to pound up a few grains to tell. And unless the corn's dried completely dry, it will sour and mold, and be a waste.

KADDERLY: We haven't any food to waste - not this year.

VAN DEMAN: We've concentrated on corn. But it's just one of thirty or more fruits and vegetables that can be dried in the gas or electric oven. And there's a lot more I might say about making the trays for the oven, and controlling the oven heat. Also there's a right way to fix every fruit and vegetable ready to dry, and a right way to store.

All that's quite a long story. It's told here in chapter and verse in this new leaflet on oven drying.

So if anybody wants the complete how-to-do-it on drying fruits and vegetables in a gas or electric oven, send us a post card. Address the card to Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D.C. Ask for the leaflet on Oven Drying.

KADDERLY: "Oven Drying the Surplus from Your Victory Garden."